

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 SAM-01 AEC-11 ACDA-19 SCI-06 IO-14

OMB-01 EA-11 EUR-25 EB-11 TRSE-00 COME-00 FRB-03

CIEP-03 CU-05 DRC-01 SWF-02 AGR-20 NIC-01 SY-04 /250 W

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R 121730Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3064

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 12189

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: THE SECRETARY'S VISIT--POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

1. THE INDIANS AWAIT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, BUT THEY DO NOT ALL HAVE THE SAME EXPECTATIONS FOR IT. WE BELIEVE THE PRIME MINISTER AND HER IMMEDIATE ENTOURAGE ARE FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRIP. THEIR OBJECTIVES ARE THAT IT SHOULD SIGNIFY THAT THE US ACCEPTS INDIAN PREEMINENCE IN SOUTH ASIA, DOES NOT INTEND TO TRY TO "BALANCE" INDIA AGAINST PAKISTAN, AND ACCEPTS INDIA'S RIGHT TO PURSUE ITS OWN TECHNOLOGICAL "INDEPENDENCE", PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR POLICY. THEY HOPE IT WILL SIGNIFY THAT THE US ACCEPTS THE NEED TO CONSIDER INDIAN INTERESTS IN PURSUING ITS POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH ASIA AND IS CONSCIOUS OF INDIAN SENSITIVITIES ABOUT "GREAT POWER" ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. MRS. GANDHI WILL EXPECT THE US TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR "PEACE AND STABILITY" IN SOUTH ASIA. WE BELIEVE SHE WILL INTERPRET THAT TO MEAN AT LEAST TACIT US ACCEPTANCE OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT WITH PAKISTAN, CONFIDENTIAL

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INDIA'S POSITION ON KASHMIR AND SIKKIM, INDIAN SENSITIVITIES

ABOUT STABILITY IN BANGLADESH, AND INDIA'S SECURITY CONCERNS ALONG ITS NORTHERN BORDER. THE INDIANS INSIST THEY NEED ARMS AND A POWERFUL ARMY BECAUSE OF THE CHINESE AND THAT PAKISTAN HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM INDIA. THEY BELIEVE THE PAKISTANI ARMY IS ALREADY LARGER THAN IS NECESSARY AND WILL LOOK CAREFULLY FOR ANY SIGNS THAT THE US IS RECONSIDERING ITS ARMS SUPPLY POLICY ON THE SUBCONTINENT WHICH MRS. GANDHI WOULD INTERPRET AS DESIGNED TO CHANGE THE EXISTING RATIO OF FORCES IN THE AREA. MRS. GANDHI WILL LOOK FOR A POLITICAL RESULT FROM THE VISIT WHICH ENABLES HER TO ARGUE TO HER DOMESTIC AUDIENCE THAT THE US ACCEPTS INDIA'S FULL NON-ALIGNED STATUS AND INDEPENDENCE AND IS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. HER STYLE, AS THE SECRETARY KNOWS, IS TO LISTEN, NOT LEAD; TO EXPLAIN INDIA'S POSITIONS, NOT TO ASK FOR US ASSURANCES OR ASSISTANCE. THIS IS LIKELY TO BE TRUE BOTH IN HER APPROACH TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT SHE WILL SUMMARIZE INDIA'S VIEWS AND ITS PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, AND WAIT TO SEE HOW THE SECRETARY RESPONDS. WE BELIEVE SHE WILL WANT TO HAVE TIME TO ASSESS THE SECRETARY'S VISITS TO PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH AFTER HIS VISIT TO INDIA, IF THIS IS THE ORDER IN WHICH THE TRIP PROGRESSES, BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO MOVE AHEAD ON SPECIFIC AND DETAILED ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH THE US. SHE WILL, THEREFORE, PROBABLY PREFER TO LIMIT THE PUBLIC DESCRIPTION OF ANY SPECIFIC ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE CONVERSATIONS WHICH MAY TAKE PLACE TO GENERALITIES. THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WOULD ESTABLISH THE ATMOSPHERE, SET THE SCENE, AND THE DETAILS WOULD BE SPELLED OUT LATER. MRS. GANDHI IS CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS (NEW DELHI 12063), BUT SHE WANTS THIS VISIT AND WANTS IT TO BE A SUCCESS, A SYMBOL OF THE END OF A PERIOD OF INDO-US STRAINS. SHE WILL NOT EXPECT THAT ALL OF HER OBJECTIVES DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL BE MET BUT WILL LOOK FOR A GENERALIZED SENSE OF US POLICY AND ATTITUDES WHICH, WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER, GIVES HER A "FEELING" THAT THE US UNDERSTANDS AND IS THINKING IN PARALLEL WITH HER OWN CONCEPTION OF THE PROPER INDO-US RELATIONSHIP.

3. OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS AND WITH MRS. GANDHI'S OWN STAFF UNDERLINE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WANTS THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO SET A POLITICAL FRAME-
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WORK WITHIN WHICH OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES CAN THEN BE DISCUSSED. WE DEDUCE FROM THE FLAVOR OF THESE DISCUSSIONS AND OTHERS WE HAVE HAD AT LOWER LEVELS THAT ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS WILL FOLLOW ONLY IF SUCH A FRAMEWORK ENABLES HER TO DEFEND HERSELF AGAINST DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN POLITICAL CRITICISM THAT THE US IS SUPPORTING PAKISTAN AGAINST INDIA, EXERTING PRESSURE ON INDIA, EQUATING INDIA WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, AND TAKING INDIA FOR GRANTED. THE DELAYS IN THE

SCHEDULING OF THE VISIT AND THE FACT THAT THE VISIT WILL NOT BE ONE "TO INDIA" ALONE BUT TO A CLUSTER OF OTHER STATES IS SEEN BY SOME INDIANS--HYPERSENSITIVE TO THE FAINTEST SLIGHT--ARE CAUSING SOME BLUR, AND WE SUSPECT THIS AFFECTS MRS. GANDHI AND ADDS TO HER INSTINCTIVE WARINESS AS THE VISIT APPROACHES. IT INCREASINGLY APPEARS THAT SHE HAS HELD THE REST OF THE GOVERNMENT ON A SHORT LEASH IN TERMS OF PREPARING SPECIFICS FOR THE VISIT OTHER THAN THE JOINT COMMISSION. IF THERE IS ANY GENERAL IMPRESSION WE GET, IT IS OF CAUTION ON HER PART.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 12189

4. THE BUREAUCRATS ON THE OTHER HAND, PARTICULARLY THE ECONOMIC BUREAUCRATS, HOPE AND EXPECT THAT IF THE VISIT GOES WELL POLITICALLY IT WILL BRING WITH IT--OR CLOSELY IN ITS WAKE--A SERIES OF US AGREEMENTS IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD. THE DEGREE OF OPTIMISM ON THIS FRONT VARIES WITH THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS INVOLVED. THOSE WITH MORE EXPERIENCE AND WHO ARE BETTER INFORMED ARE AWARE THAT THERE ARE LIMITS ON WHAT THE US CAN PROVIDE. BUT EVEN THESE EXPECT SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS, AND SOME OF THESE ARE SKETCHED OUT IN AN ACCOMPANYING MESSAGE.

5. THE RANK AND FILE OF THE POLITICIANS, PRESS AND PUBLIC, HOWEVER, EXPECT MUCH MORE. MOST MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, NON-OFFICIAL BUT EDUCATED INDIANS, AND MOST (BUT NOT ALL) NEWSMEN WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED EXPECT THAT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WILL PRODUCE "GREAT THINGS." THESE ARE RARELY ARTICULATED. WE DOUBT MANY OF THEM HAVE ANY NOTION OF WHAT THEY MEAN. BUT CERTAINLY FOOD, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND SOME BENIFICENT "LAYING ON THE HANDS" WHICH WILL BLESS INDIAN POLICY ON A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES ARE AMONG THE VAGUE EXPECTATIONS. THE INTENSITY OF THESE EXPECTATIONS MAY GROW AS THE TIME OF THE VISIT APPROACHES. TO SOME EXTENT THIS SPRINGS FROM THE DISMAL STATE OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY AND A GENERAL HOPE FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE WHO WILL BRING RELIEF. THE SECRETARY'S OWN CHARISMA AND THE IMAGE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY THINGS HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED ELSEWHERE ON HIS TRAVELS ARE VIVID IN THE MINDS OF MOST INDIANS. THE FOOD SITUATION IN INDIA IS WEAK, AND THERE WILL PROBABLY BE AT LEAST SOME FOOD RIOTING AND CONSTANT NEWS STORIES ABOUT SHORTAGES BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF OCTOBER WHEN THE SUMMER HARVEST WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION. IN THIS CONTEXT, POPULAR EXPECTATION OF US FOOD ASSISTANCE WILL BE PROPORTIONATELY HIGH AND WILL BE FOCUSED ON THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. TO MANY INDIANS THE SECRETARY'S VISIT MAY CONNOTE IN SOME CRUDE SENSE A "COMING TO CANOSSA" AFTER THE 1971 BANGLADESH WAR. AT THE MINIMUM THERE WILL BE AN EXPECTATION THAT THE SECRETARY WILL LEAN OVER BACKWARDS TO EXPRESS HIS RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE OF INDIA. THE "LEFT" WITHIN CONGRESS, THE COMMUNISTS, AND THE RADICAL "RIGHT" (THE JANA SANGH) ARE EXTREMELY UNEASY ABOUT THE ENTIRE VISIT. THEY WILL ATTACK THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE SECRETARY WHETHER THE TALKS GO WELL OR BADLY. THEY WILL CRITICIZE THE US (AND PROBABLY BE JOINED BY A MORE GENERAL SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION) IF THE VISIT DOES NOT PRODUCE OR PROMISE SUBSTANTIAL CONCRETE ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR INDIA. BUT THEY WILL ALSO WARN OF THE DANGER OF NEW AND INCREASED US INFLUENCE OVER INDIAN POLICY FROM SUCH BENEFITS. POPULAR EXPECTATIONS THUS ARE HIGH AND, REGARDLESS OF WHAT WE DO, THERE WILL BE SOME DISAPPOINTMENT AND CRITICISM AND WE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR THIS.

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6. (DUTY REQUIRES THAT WE CALL ATTENTION TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE "LEFT" IS PROCLAIMING THE HORRORS OF AMERICAN AID-- LAST WEEK BLITZ STATED I "WAS ATTEMPTING TO DIRECT THE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL POLICIES OF THE COUNTRY WITH THE OBJECT OF PUTTING INDIA'S NECK BACK INTO THE AMERICAN AID NOOSE."-- MUCH IN THE MANNER THAT BR'ER RABBIT ASKED NOT TO BE THROWN INTO THE BRIAR PATCH. IT COULD VERY WELL BE THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE WORRIED THAT WE ARE GOING TO AWARD THEM INDIA AS A KIND OF COLD WAR COMPENSATION FOR THE LOSS OF EGYPT, OR WHATEVER. THEY COULD WELL BE TRYING TO AROUSE OUR COMPETITIVENESS. I AM INCLINED

TO DOUBT THIS, BUT THE SUSPICION PERSISTS, AND WE HAVE NO WAY
OF JUDGING. THIS IS ADMITTEDLY THE KIND OF USELESS SPECULATION
WHICH MUST DRIVE POLITICAL OFFICERS INTO CULTURAL AFFAIRS, AND
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FOR WHICH WE APOLOGIZE.)

7. WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE CAN OR SHOULD AIM AT ENTHUSING AN ENTIRE
POPULATION. IF WE HAD OUR PREFERENCES, WE WOULD AIM AT AVOIDING
ENTHUSIASM AT ALL. WHAT WE WANT IS A NORMAL AND STABLE RELATION-
SHIP, FREE FROM THE KIND OF EXCITEMENTS, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE,
WHICH HAVE AFFECTED INDO-US RELATIONS IN THE PAST. OUR IMMEDIATE
AUDIENCE IS MRS. GANDHI AND, BELOW HER, THE KEY POLITICIANS
OF THE CABINET. THE FACT THAT PARLIAMENT WILL BE OUT OF SESSION
UNTIL MID-NOVEMBER WILL PROVIDE THE GOVERNMENT TIME AND OPPOR-
TUNITY TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST CRITICISM. IF THE TALKS HERE GO
WELL AND THE VISITS TO BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN DO NOT RAISE
NEW CONCERNS ON INDIA'S PART, THE PRIME MINISTER AND HER GOVERN-
MENT WILL STRONGLY DEFEND AND ARTICULATE THE BASIS OF THE NEW
INDO-US RELATIONSHIP.
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